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ABSTRACT

Researchers developed an instrument based on definitions of the variables of self-esteem, self-awareness, self-assertion, and acceptance of others to be used as outcome criteria to define and measure the outcomes of the Colorado Outward Bound School experience and to determine if the outcomes were caused by the program. The Outward Bound course lasted three weeks, during which participants studied survival skills and engaged in various wilderness experiences. Each of 620 participants was assigned to one of 3 courses and, randomly, to one of 11 groups. Each participant received an evaluation instrument to complete. Data indicated that Outward Bound had a positive impact on the participants' self-assertion. It also affected the level of self-esteem, although this effect was not found in all courses. There was weak evidence that the program affected the participants' acceptance of others. The study failed to show any impact on self-awareness. In a written observation, a program participant described his initial fears, the self-confidence gained through training and actual experience, the reactions of others in the group, and, finally, his positive feelings about himself because he had persevered. (CM)

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EVALUATION OF THE EFFECTS
OF OUTWARD BOUND

PART ONE: RESEARCH REPORT
PART TWO: PARTICIPANT
OBSERVATION

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Roy Gabriel
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Field Services

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1975

Preface

Education has been spoken of in many forms of discourse, but two forms are dominant: the quantitative and the narrative. Rarely is the same endeavor addressed at both levels. Sociologists have occasionally wedded the two modes, as when the Lynds studied Middletown, and Oscar Lewis described life in the barrio. Education has rarely seen them joined. Educational evaluation has been almost exclusively quantitative. Exemplars of narrative portrayal by evaluators are only beginning to appear, Charles Brauner's "The First Probe" (Brauner, 1969) and some of Robert Stake's work being most noteworthy.

The quantitative portrayal of education, with its measurements and statistics, is disciplined, but often dull. And it is not quantitative in any fundamental sense. Its essential features are preordinateness (prior specification of the phenomena to be observed and analyzed), discipline (the rigorous analysis of propositions) and intersubjectivity (the sharing of common information among observers).

The narrative portrayal of a program can be enthralling and richly evocative, but it is frequently untrustworthy. It elicits private judgments from the reader; it is directed toward discovery, rather than confirmation. It sparks interest in the unanticipated, the inchoate. It suggests questions as much as it answers them. It adds meaning to quantitative data as no psychometric analysis can. It is a record of the isolated, unique experience that no instrument other than the mind and eye can recognize.

Our sense of value is affected by both types of portrayal. As evaluators, we lean in one direction---toward the quantitative---when we are confident that we can anticipate the decisions and the questions that need answers. We lean in the opposite direction---toward the narrative---when our sense of what matters is tentative and evolving. We are coming to realize that we ought to be inclined in both directions in nearly all instances.

Taken together, the two descriptions of Outward Bound in this report offer the reader a contrast in textures: a tightly woven experimental report to filter out hokum and self-deception; a loosely woven narrative that captures the singular and unmeasurable. This evaluation of Outward Bound is a unique assessment of an engaging human experience. Increasingly, we will come to appreciate the contribution of such dual portrayals.

---Gene Glass

RESEARCH REPORT

What happens to the young person who elects to undergo the physical challenges associated with the rocks, cliffs, snowfields, and streams of the Rocky Mountains and the interpersonal challenge of a small group isolated in a foreign environment? Proponents of the Outward Bound program, alumni and staff, maintain that the psychological effects are unique to each participant and cannot be anticipated. In contrast, many others claim that the program causes profound, predictable changes in the participant's feelings about himself and others. Outward Bound literature and advertisements suggest that the participant will become more aware of his capabilities and limitations, will expand his capabilities, will grow more accepting of his characteristics, will more readily assert himself against challenges from the environment, become more self-reliant, and increase his acceptance of and ability to deal effectively with people.

Although no detailed theoretical explanation has yet been given concerning the psychological relationship between the Outward Bound experience and its expected results, several studies have been undertaken to test the effects of the experience on those variables thought to be important. Among the variables studied have been self-concept, achievement, motivation to achieve, social adjustment, aggression, values, attitudes toward school, alienation, and the recidivism of adjudicated delinquents. These studies have been impaired by a variety of design limitations, so that a definitive empirical demonstration of program effects has yet to be made. The present study was undertaken at the request of the Colorado Outward Bound School to make such a demonstration.

The investigation reported here is part of a larger evaluation undertaken for the Colorado Outward Bound School by the Bureau of Educational Field Services of the University of Colorado. The purposes of the study were to define and measure outcomes of Outward Bound, and by using a quasi-experimental research design, to determine whether these outcomes were caused by the program.

Four Criterion Variables. Four principal variables were chosen as outcome criteria. These variables were chosen on the basis of interviews with staff, analysis of program documentation, previous evaluation studies, and the published objectives of the program. Their definitions are as follows:

> Self-Esteem. A person high on this scale will endorse statements which indicate his valuing of himself, his perception of himself as neither vastly superior nor inferior to others, his acceptance of himself regardless of weaknesses, his acceptance of his body, his mental abilities, and his ability to relate to others. He will not endorse self-deprecating comments, nor will he report fears of judgment by others.
>
> Self-Awareness. A person scoring high on this scale engages in self-examination and analysis and is aware of his emotions, abilities, potential, and limitations.
>
> Self-Assertion. A person scoring high on this scale will be active rather than passive, will assume leadership and responsibility instead of avoiding them, will confront rather than avoid fearful or challenging situations.

Acceptance of Others. The person who scores high on this scale shows compassion for others, acceptance of others regardless of their weaknesses, willingness to assist less able people, and willingness to take responsibility for others when it is necessary. "Others" here definitely should mean persons both in and outside the patrol.

Published instruments which purport to measure the constructs were examined and judged unsuitable. Instead, the researchers developed an instrument based on the above definitions. The development, refinement, and validation of the instrument have been described elsewhere (Smith, Gabriel and Anderson, 1973). Results of the analysis of test data collected during development are shown in Table I.

Table One: Results of Pilot Test
Development Data From Outward Bound and Control Groups

Scale	Number of Items	Mean	Standard Deviation	Reliability
Self Esteem (SES)	16	51.82	8.35	.77[a]
Self Awareness (SAW)	6	21.48	2.97	.44
Self-Assertion (SAS)	16	56.60	7.16	.78
Acceptance of Others (ACO)	9	29.99	4.98	.59
Composite	47	159.89	17.66	.86

a. Cronbach's alpha

Research Design

The objective of the study might be most adequately fulfilled by an experimental design in which subjects are assigned at random to a treatment group and a control group, both of which are tested on the criterion measures following the treatment. Causal claims are most validly assessed with such a true experiment. Interference by the researchers into participant selection and placement necessary in implementing a true experiment was impossible for this study, however. The decision was made instead to use the interrupted time-series design, a naturalistic, quasi-experimental procedure.

The time-series design employs repeated observations of a variable, with the treatment intervening between two selected observations in the series. Through appropriate statistical procedures (Glass, Willson, and Gottman, 1975), it can be determined whether the treatment had a significant effect on the dependent variable, i.e., an effect apart from the regular fluctuations which occur in the observations of the variable over time. If the change in the level of the variable is statistically significant, i.e., non-random, then a search begins for factors, other than the treatment, which may have been responsible for the effect. As these rival explanations are evaluated and eliminated, the causal claim for treatment becomes more valid.

The variant of time-series design used for the study reported here is a unit-replicative--stratified group--single-intervention design which eliminates several alternative explanations for a shift in level of the series and provides control groups for two of the three course groups involved.

Procedures

The Outward Bound course has been described in detail elsewhere. Briefly, the course lasts three weeks at several locations in the Colorado Rockies. Participants are organized into patrols of approximately ten members led by a trained mountaineer. Topics are studied such as map and compass reading, mountain safety, first aid, knots, rope skills and camp craft. The patrols engage in rock climbing, rapelling, extended alpine expedition, a solo experience, and an endurance race. The Colorado organization runs three courses each summer.

All participants who had registered for one of the 1974 summer courses and had paid a tuition installment by April 1 were considered eligible for the study. Late registrants and certain special groups of students were thus excluded. The eligible population numbered 620. Each participant had already selected or been assigned by the organization to one of the three courses (June, July, or August). Each participant in the June course was randomly assigned to one of eleven groups. The groups represented the two-week period in which the subjects of the group would receive and complete the instrument sent to them by mail. Eleven randomly equivalent groups were so formed. On April 15, all subjects in the first group were sent the instrument previously described. On April 30, all subjects in the second group received the instrument. This procedure was repeated every two weeks until September 30, when the eleventh and final group received the instrument. Each participant completed the instrument only once. This procedure was repeated for those participants assigned

to the July course and again for those participants assigned to the August course. The design is illustrated in Figure 1.

The participants were asked to return the instrument within 24 hours of receiving it. If it had not been returned after one week a follow-up letter was sent. Phone calls were made to those who did not respond to the first follow-up. The average rate of return of the instrument was 77 percent.

Each group (representing the two-week period in which participants were to respond) was divided into four subgroups based on the date the participants completed the instrument. The data from each scale was converted into subgroup means. Thus, forty-four means were graphed for each scale and for each of the three course groups (June, July, and August). These series of observations were analyzed according to statistical procedures developed by Glass, Willson, and Gottman (1975) using computer program TMS (Bower, Padia, and Glass, 1974).

Results

If the claims of Outward Bound are true, one would expect that the levels of self-assertion, self-awareness, self-esteem, and acceptance of others would be higher among those people who had recently experienced the program. In Figure 2 appears the series of 44 observations (subgroup means) for the participants of the June course on the self-assertion scale (SAS). Sixteen observations were made before the treatment and twenty-eight after. A marked increase in the level of the variable occurred immediately following the treatment intervention. Appropriate inferential tests revealed the increase to be statistically significant. This result indicates that the Outward Bound June course did have a

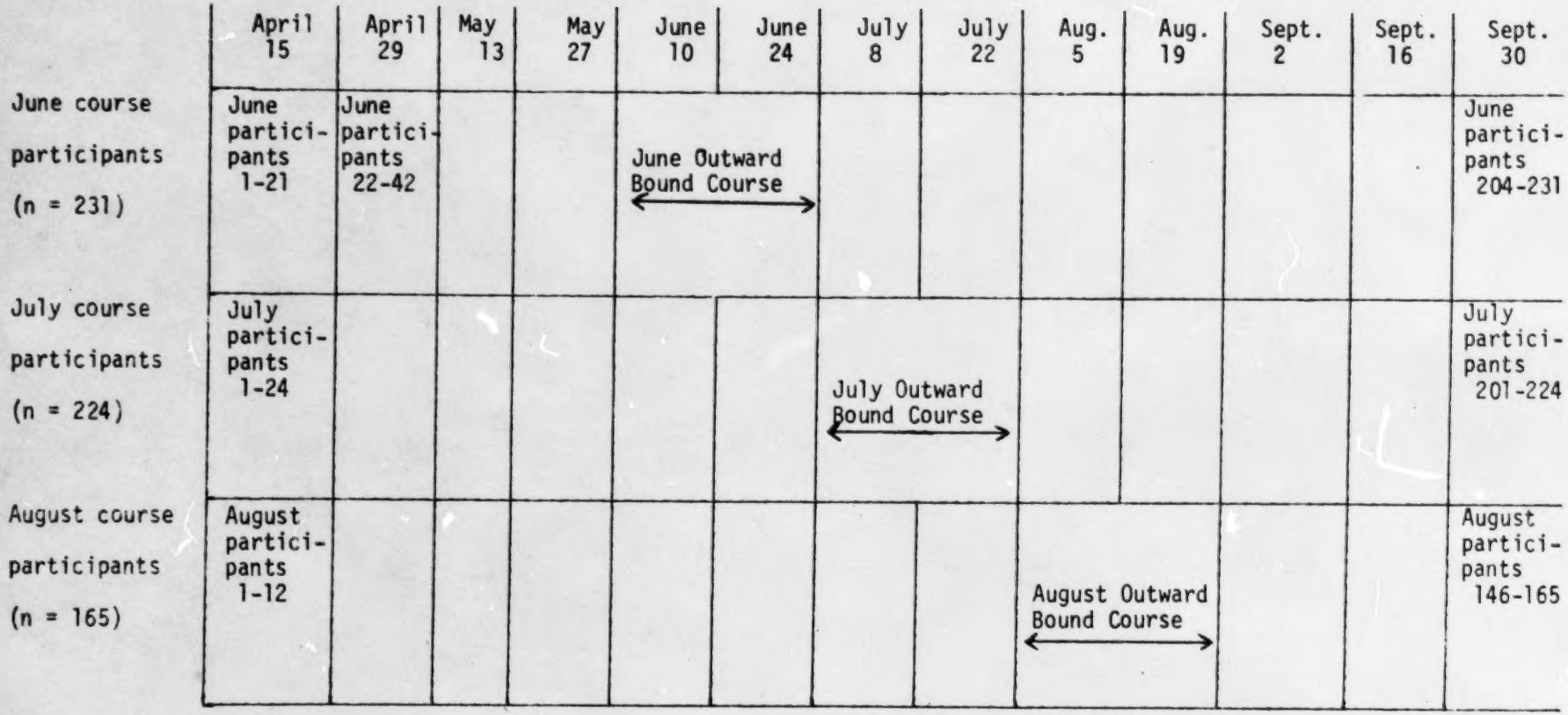

FIGURE 1. DESIGN OF STUDY

positive impact on participants' self-assertion. Alternative hypotheses about the "cause" of the change were evaluated by examining the series for the two groups which participated in the program later in the summer. Tests were made of a hypothetical intervention occurring between Observations 16 and 17 for the July and August course groups. This point coincides with the time the June course group finished the program. If there had been a significant increase in the level of the variable from observations before to observations after that point in time, then the "effect" of the June course would have been due, not to the program, but to some external, uncontrolled event. Examination of the series for the July group (Figure 3) and, for the August group (Figure 4) and application of statistical tests revealed that no significant change in the level of self-assertion occurred between Observations 16 and 17 for the July and August "control groups."

The time series for the July course on the self-assertion variable is graphed as Figure 4. Although the treatment effect is non-significant, the change from Observation 24 to Observation 25 is positive and would be reliable with a less stringent statistical test. The series for the August course on the self-assertion variable is shown in Figure 5. The change from pre to post-treatment is positive and statistically significant, indicating that the August course did have an impact on the participants' self-assertion. Competing explanations can not be ruled out because of the absence of a "control" group for the August course.

Statistically significant positive effects on self-esteem were found for two of the three courses. In Figure 6 appears the self-esteem

(SES) series for the June course. The difference was not statistically significant. For both the July course (Figure 7) and the August course (Figure 8), statistically significant effects were found. Examination of the control series (Observations 28-29 on Figure 8) for the July "treatment group" reveals no statistically significant change, a finding which increases confidence in the claim that the July course affected the participants' self-esteem. Statistically significant effects on "acceptance of others" were found only for the August course. Alternative explanations for the cause of this change can not be assessed. The "acceptance of others" series for the June, July, and August courses appear in Figures 9, 10, and 11, respectively.

No statistically significant effects on the participants' self-awareness were found for any of the three courses. The self-awareness scale was the least reliable of the four scales. The measurement error for this scale may have obscured a positive, but relatively small, intervention effect.

Summary and Conclusions.

The summary statistics for the four variables and three courses are presented in Table 2. It is reasonable to conclude that the Outward Bound course has a positive impact on the participants' self-assertion, i.e., their sense of competence, leadership and activity. There is also evidence to support the conclusion that Outward Bound affects the participants' level of self-esteem. However, this effect was not found in all three courses. Possible explanations for this inconsistency in effect across courses include differential effectiveness of the courses

and non-random assignment of participants to the course groups. Some partial, but weak evidence exists for the effect of Outward Bound on the participants' acceptance of others. This study failed to show any impact of the program on the participants' self-awareness.

An analysis of the components of the Outward Bound experience reveals that these activities bear a relatively close psychological relationship with the construct of self-assertion. The ability to persist in the course and proceed through its activities (or at least not to fail miserably at them) is very much dependent on taking initiative and assuming responsibility for oneself, and perhaps, for the others on the patrol. Apparently the patrol leaders encourage independence of action and attempt to distribute the leadership and decision-making roles among the members. Self-esteem is thought to grow when obstacles are surmounted which once provoked anxiety. Whether the Outward Bound experience enhances one's acceptance of others is questionable. Although mutual dependence and cooperation among patrol members are necessary, they may lead as readily to animosity as to mutual esteem. An individual patrol leader may reinforce rather than resolve animosity, resentment and unhealthy competition even though formal Outward Bound procedures are followed. Even where patrol members feel positive about each other, there is little in the Outward Bound curriculum that would encourage acceptance of others outside the patrol. Further investigation and discussion of this variable would be appropriate. Definitional problems with the self-awareness variable preclude its discussion.

TABLE 2

Summary of Statistical Tests for Three Outward Bound Courses (June, July, August) on Four Variables (Self-Assertion, Self-Esteem, Acceptance of Others, Self-Awareness)

	Courses		
Scales	JUNE	JULY	AUGUST
SAS	δ = 1.66 σ^2 = 5.5 t = 4.17 * p < .01	δ = 1.28 σ^2 = 13.1 t = 1.28 p = .19	δ = 1.1 σ^2 = 15.0 t = 1.71 p < .10 *
SES	δ = .47 σ^2 = 15.8 t = .51 NS	δ = 3.53 σ^2 = 21.1 t = 2.49 * p < .02	δ = 2.54 σ^2 = 31.1 t = 2.49 * p < .02
ACO	δ = -.69 σ^2 = 6.4 t = -.79 NS	δ = .85 σ^2 = 4.7 t = 1.15 p = .25	δ = 1.59 σ^2 = 7.4 t = 2.44 * p < .02
SAW	δ = .47 σ^2 = 2.0 t = 1.23 p = .2	δ = .86 σ^2 = 5.3 t = 1.04 NS	δ = .66 σ^2 = 3.9 t = 1.07 NS

* significant at $p < .10$ (two-tailed) with 42 degrees of freedom
δ is the estimated intervention effect
σ^2 is the error variance

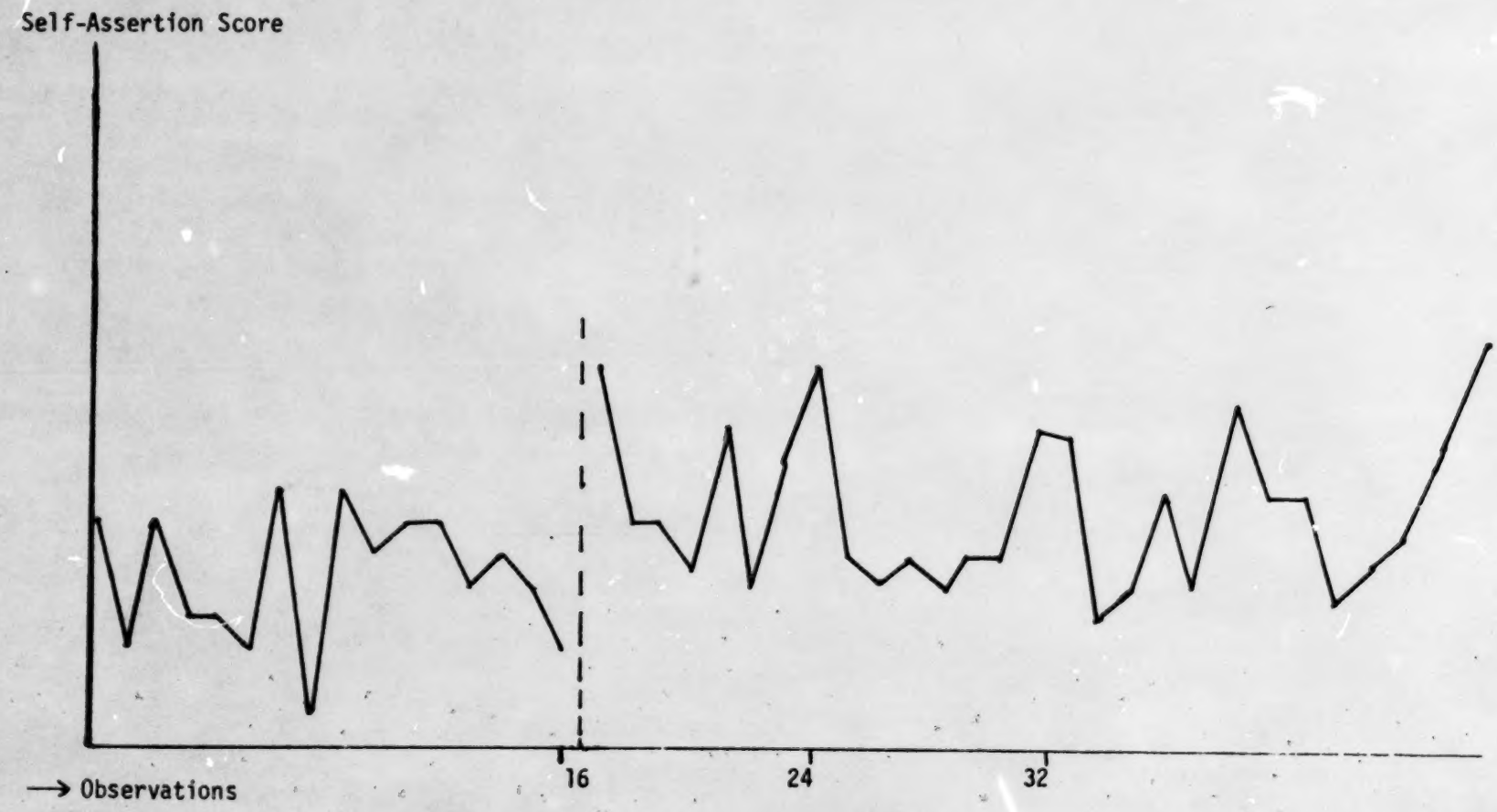

FIGURE 2. RESULTS FOR THE JUNE COURSE GROUP ON SELF-ASSERTIO

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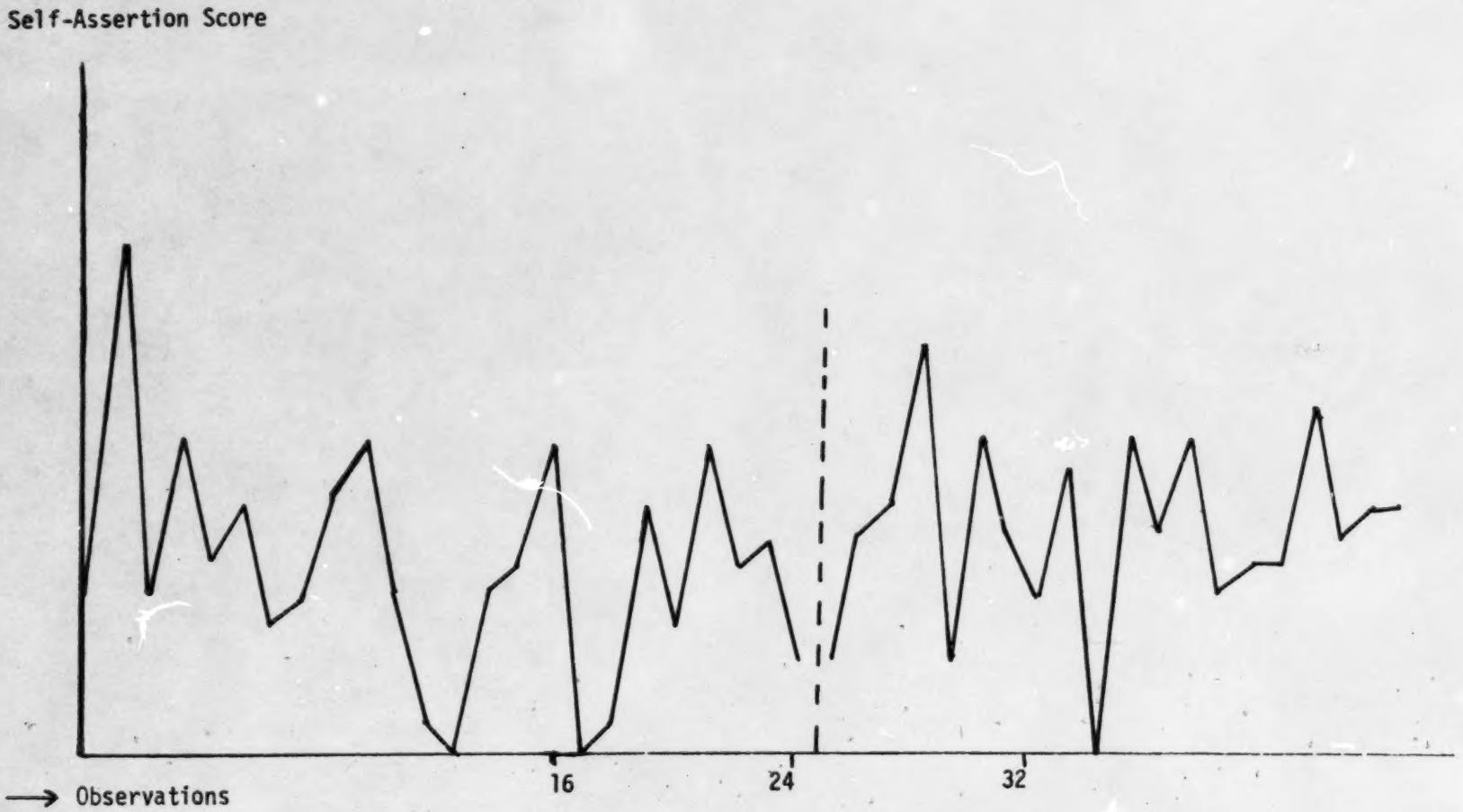

FIGURE 3. RESULTS FOR THE JULY COURSE GROUP ON SELF-ASSERTION

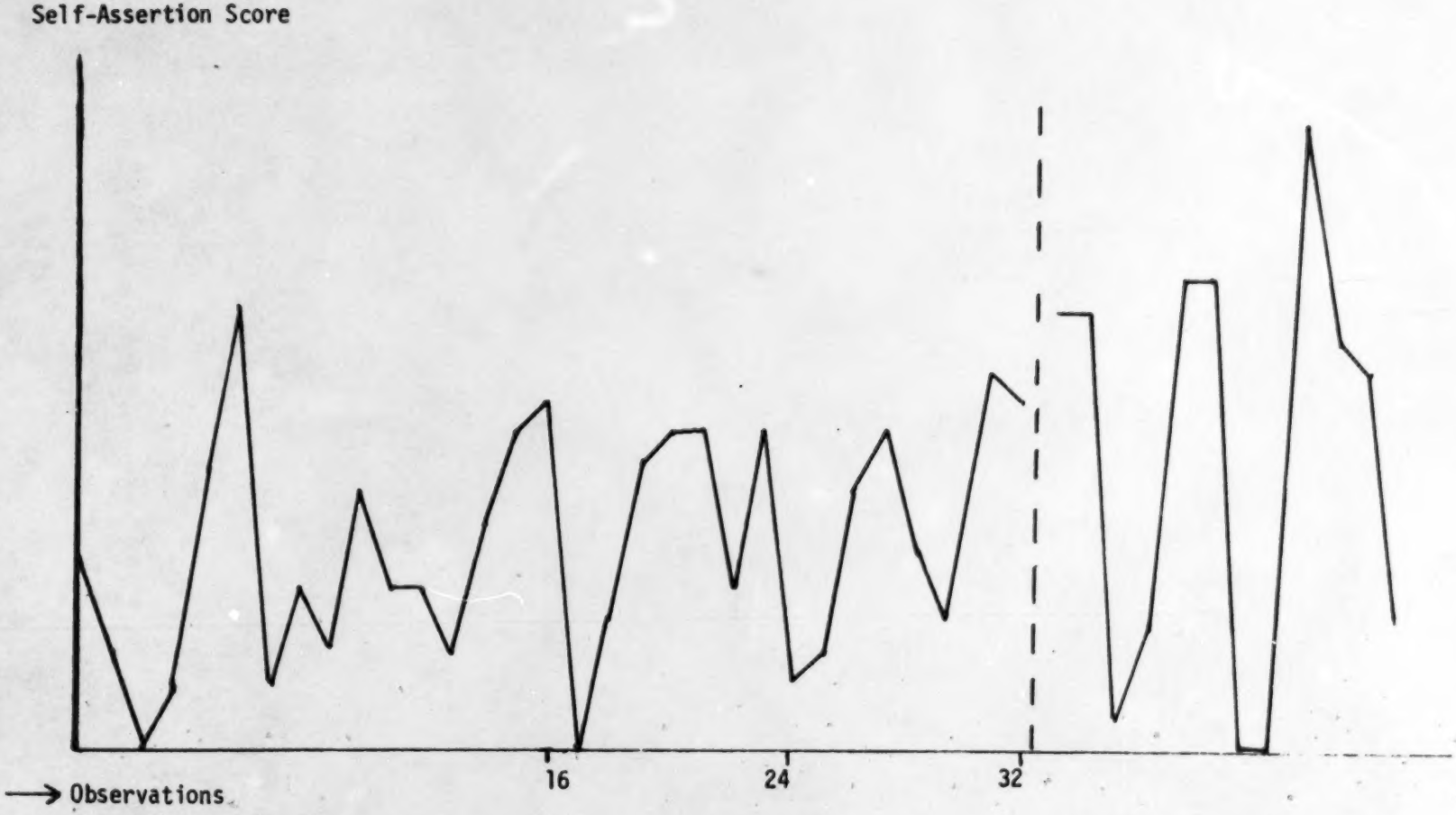

FIGURE 4. RESULTS FOR THE AUGUST COURSE ON SELF-ASSERTION

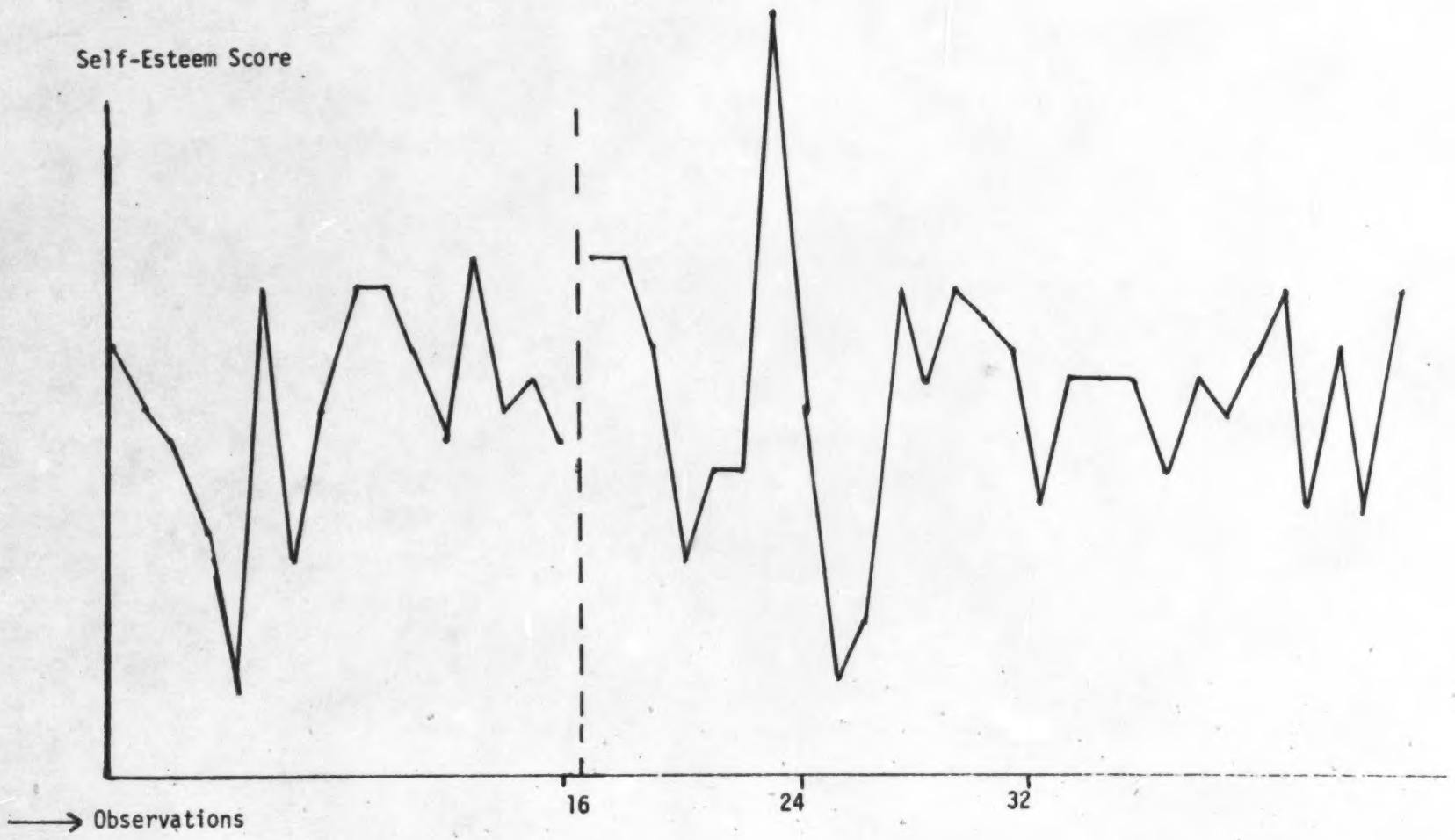

FIGURE 5. RESULTS FOR THE JUNE COURSE ON SELF-ESTEEM

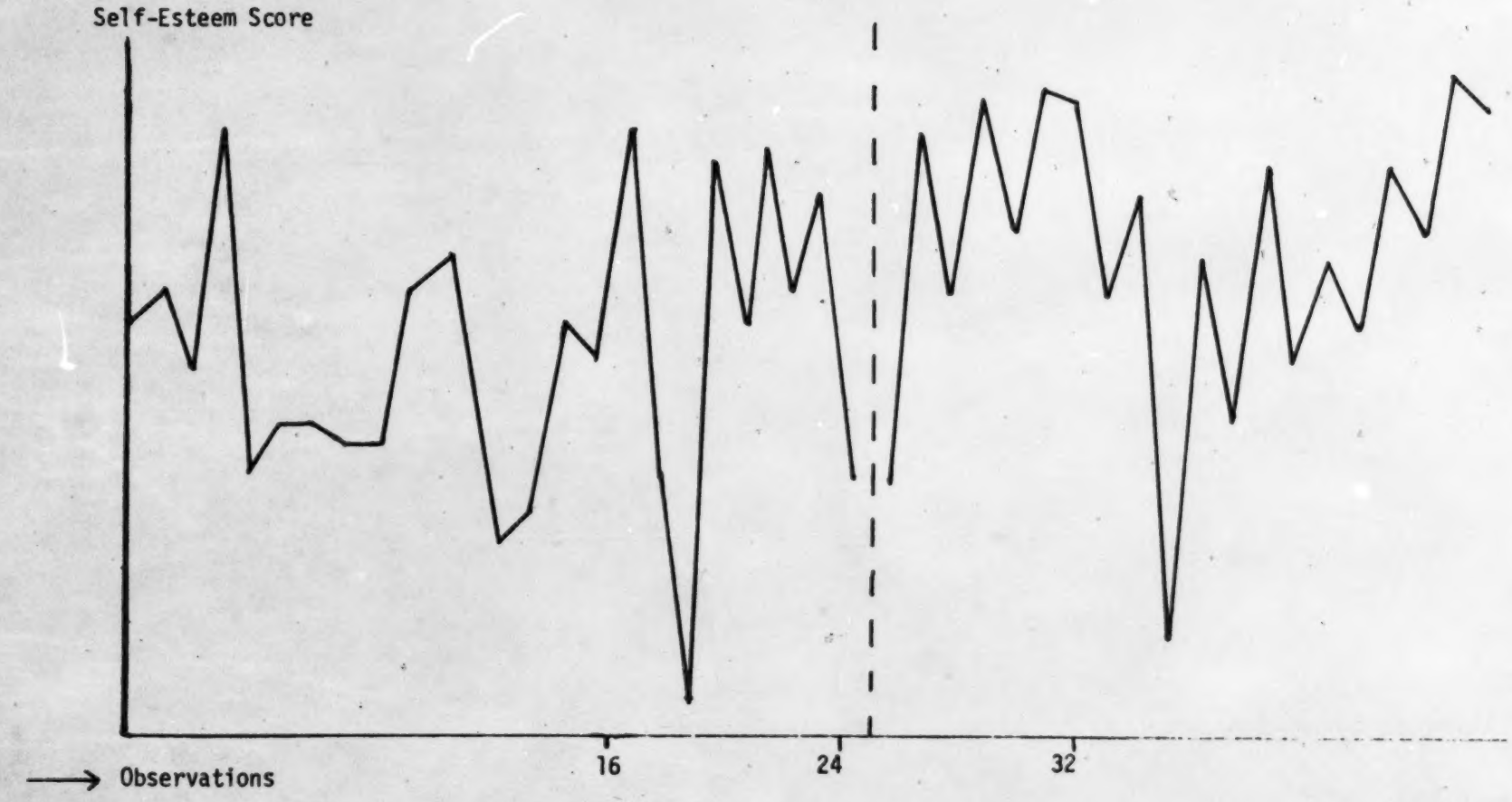

FIGURE 6. RESULTS FOR THE JULY COURSE ON SELF-ESTEEM

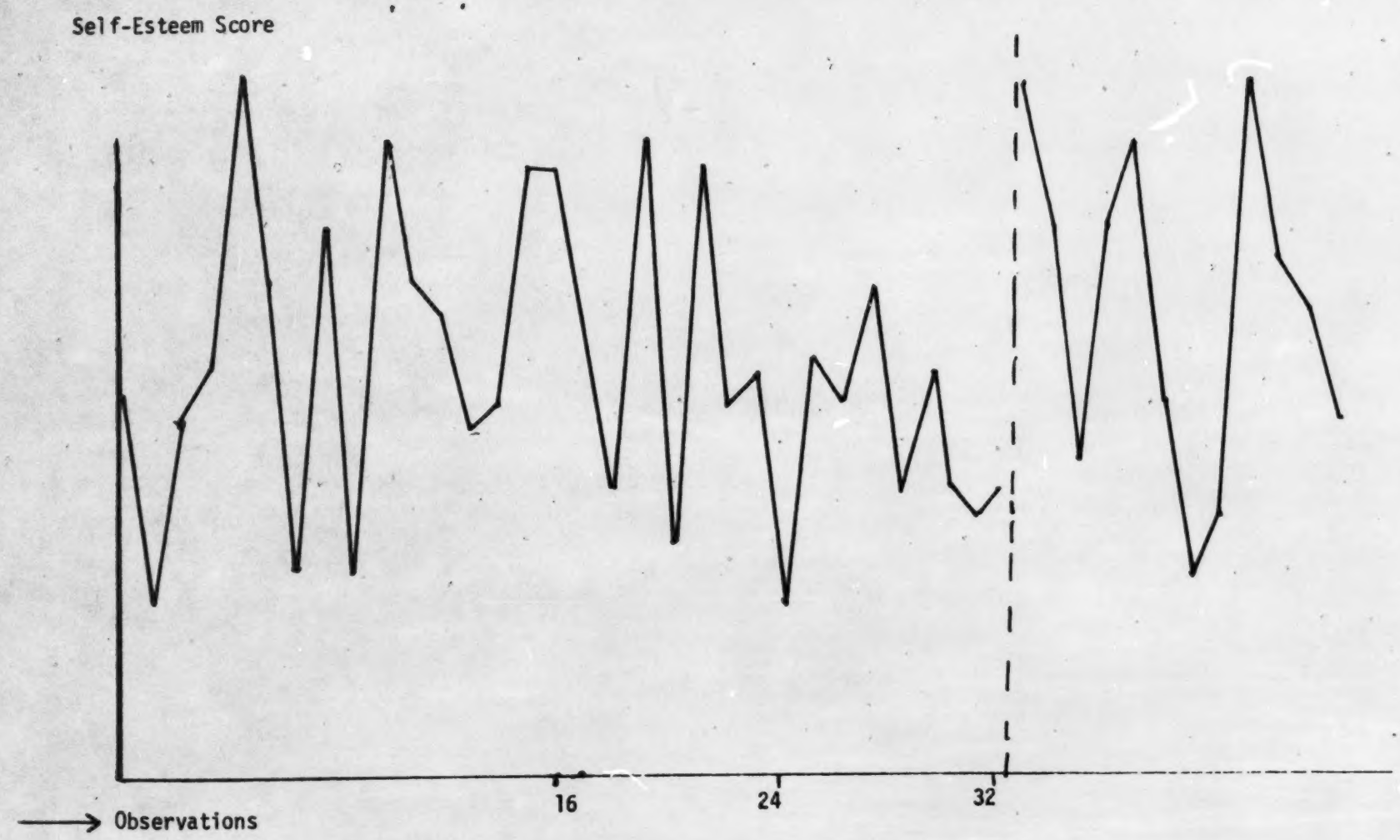

FIGURE 7. RESULTS FOR THE AUGUST COURSE ON SELF-ESTEEM

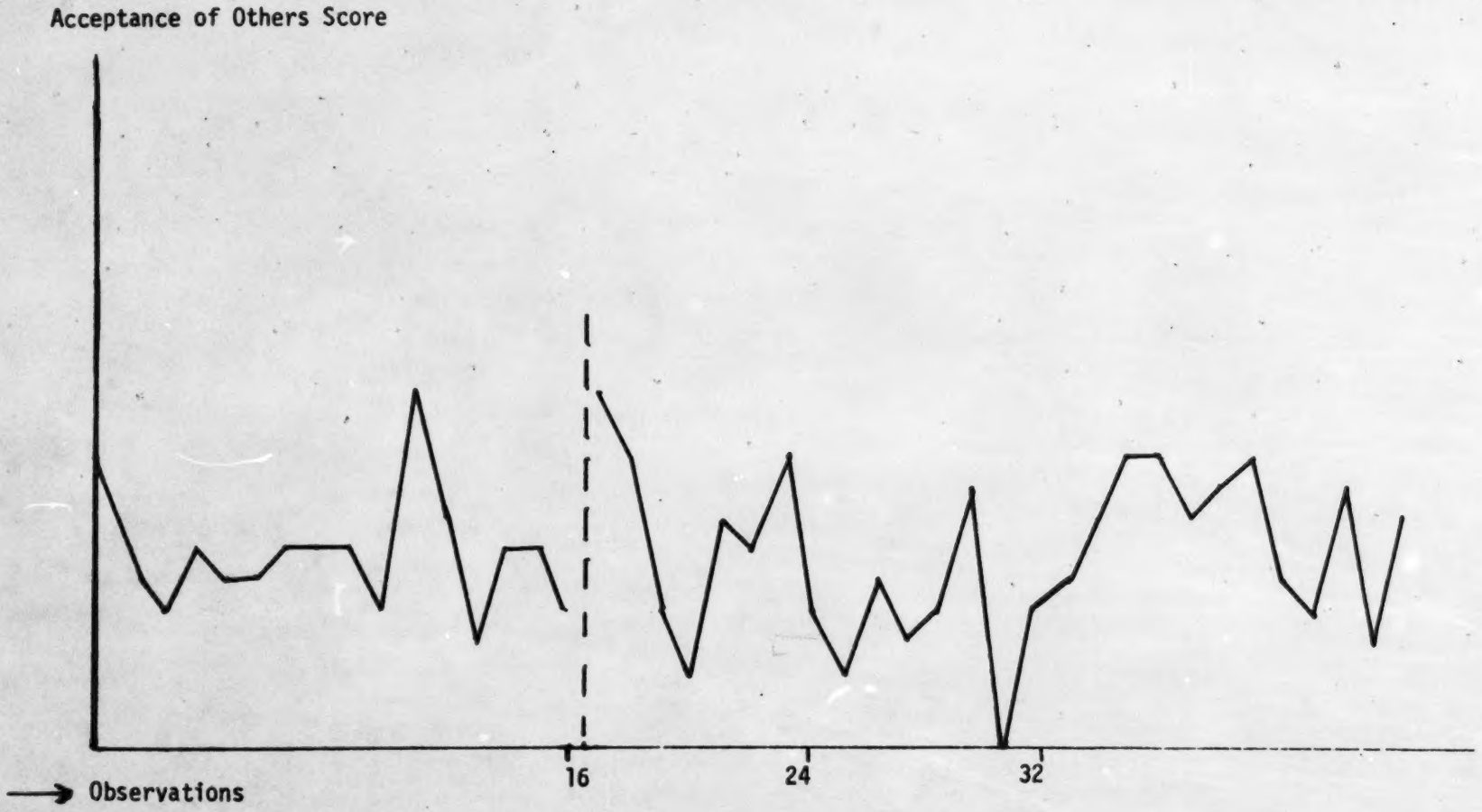

FIGURE 8. RESULTS FOR THE JUNE COURSE ON ACCEPTANCE OF OTHERS

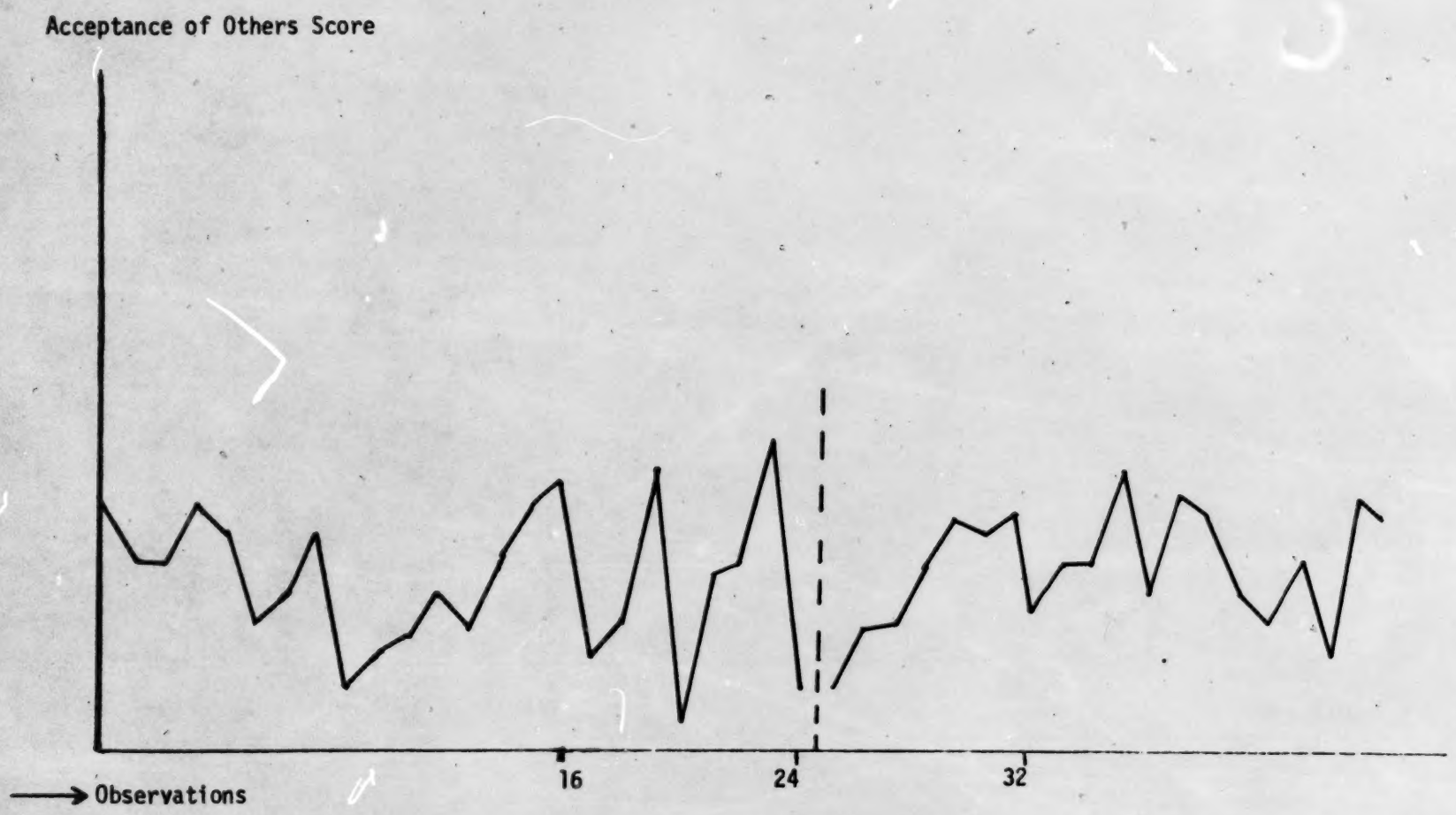

FIGURE 9. RESULTS FOR THE JULY COURSE ON ACCEPTANCE OF OTHERS

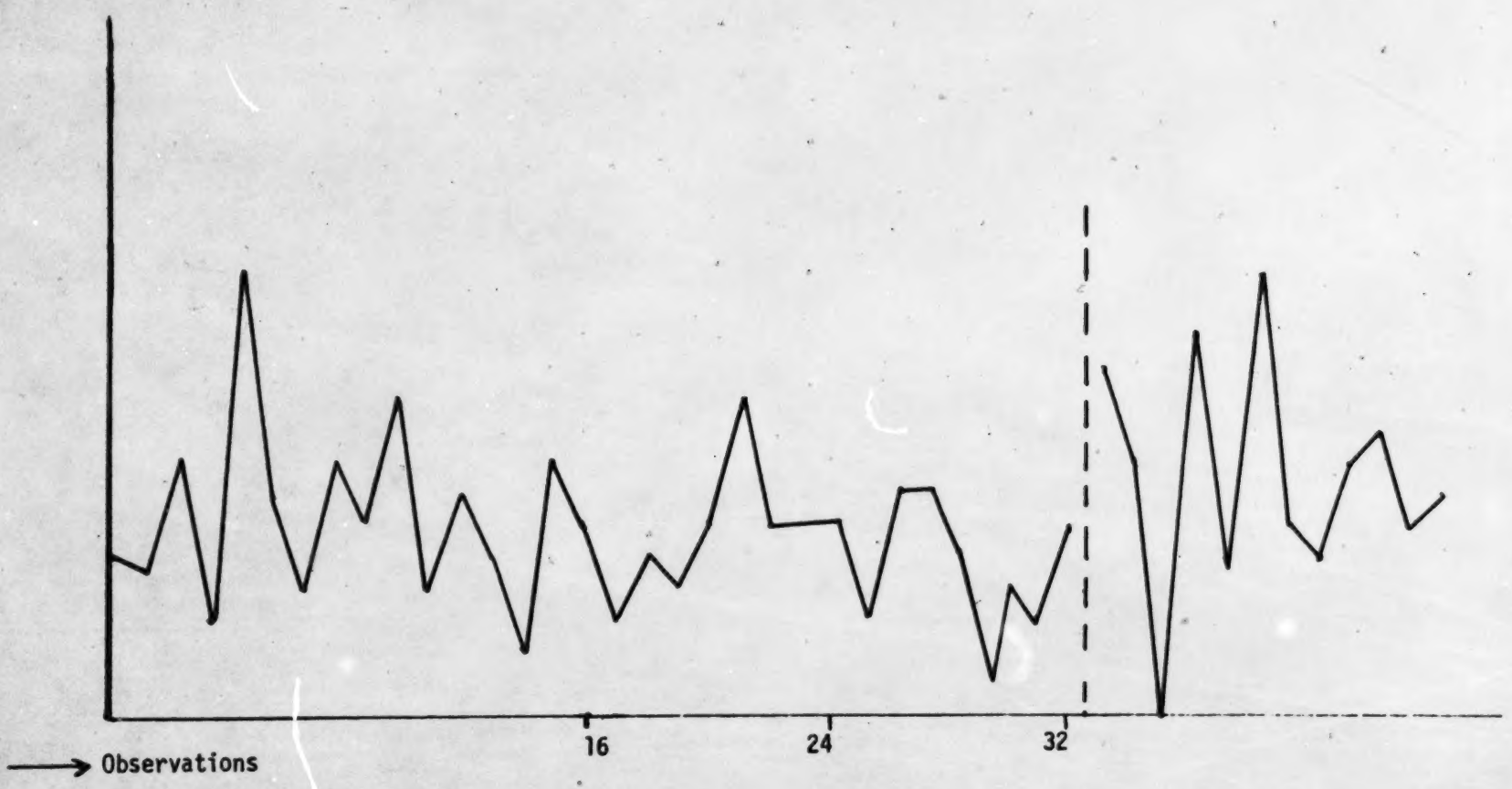

FIGURE 10. RESULTS FOR THE AUGUST COURSE ON ACCEPTANCE OF OTHERS

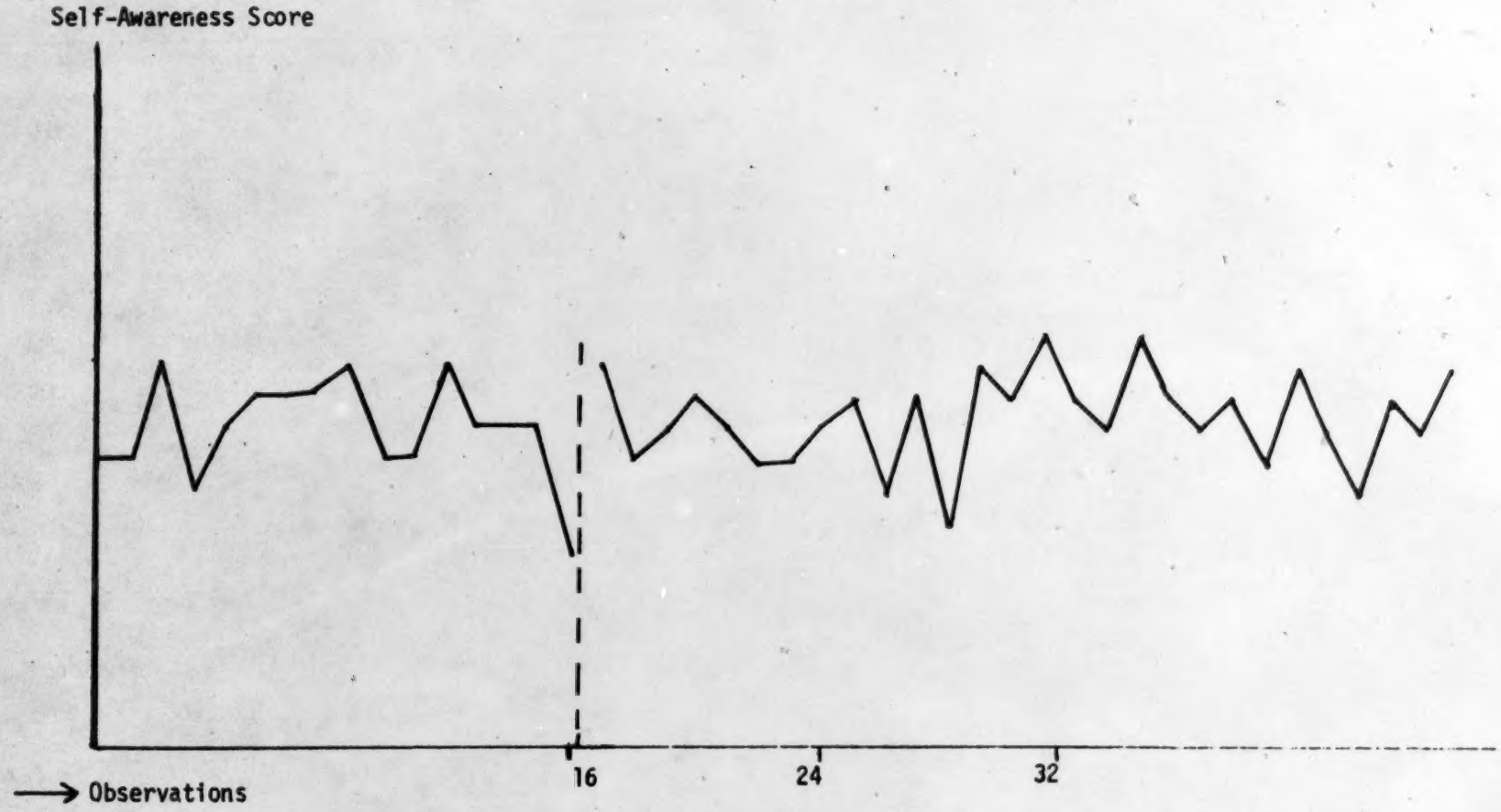

FIGURE 11. RESULTS FOR THE ~~JUNE~~ COURSE ON SELF-AWARENESS

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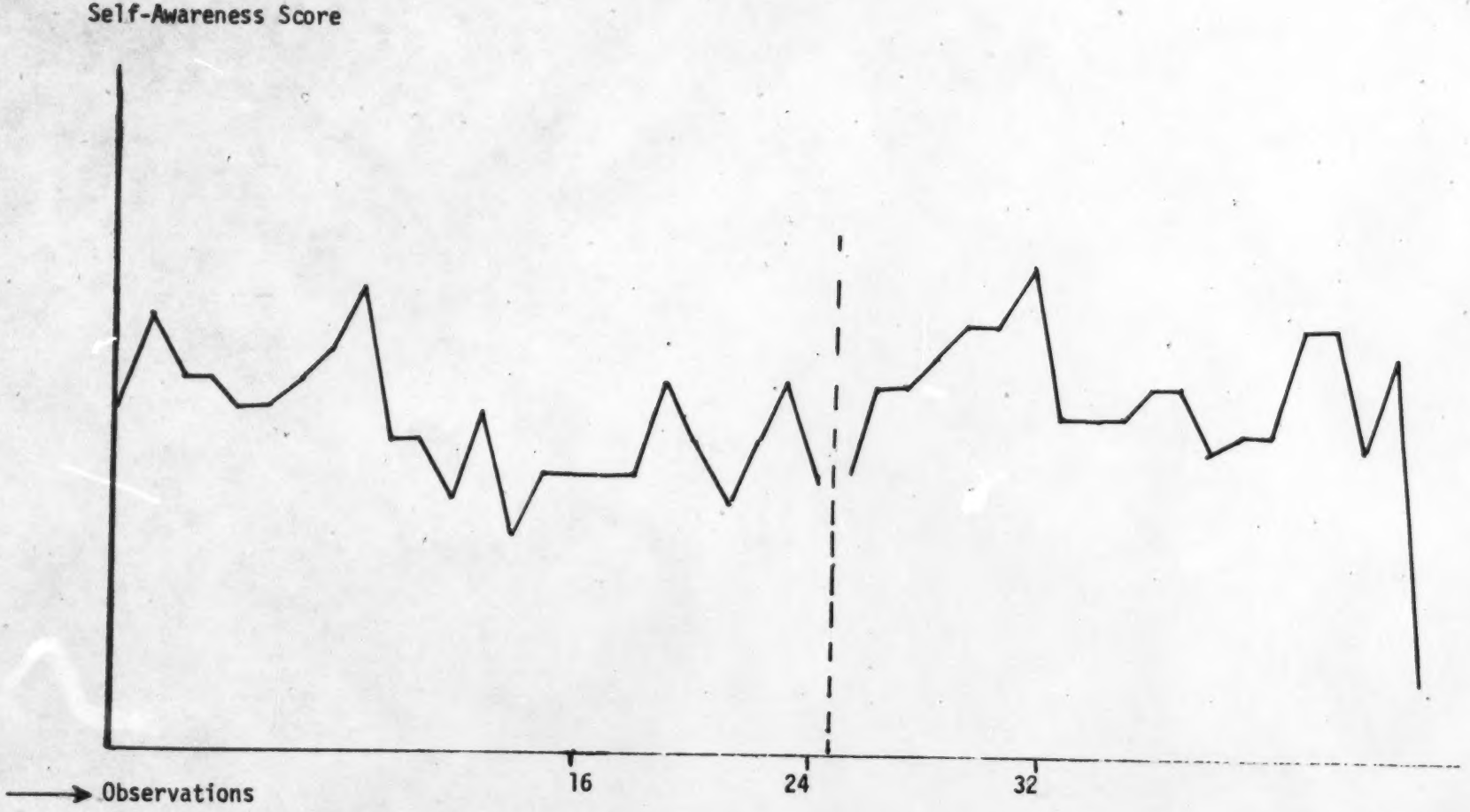

FIGURE 12. RESULTS FOR THE JULY COURSE ON SELF-AWARENESS

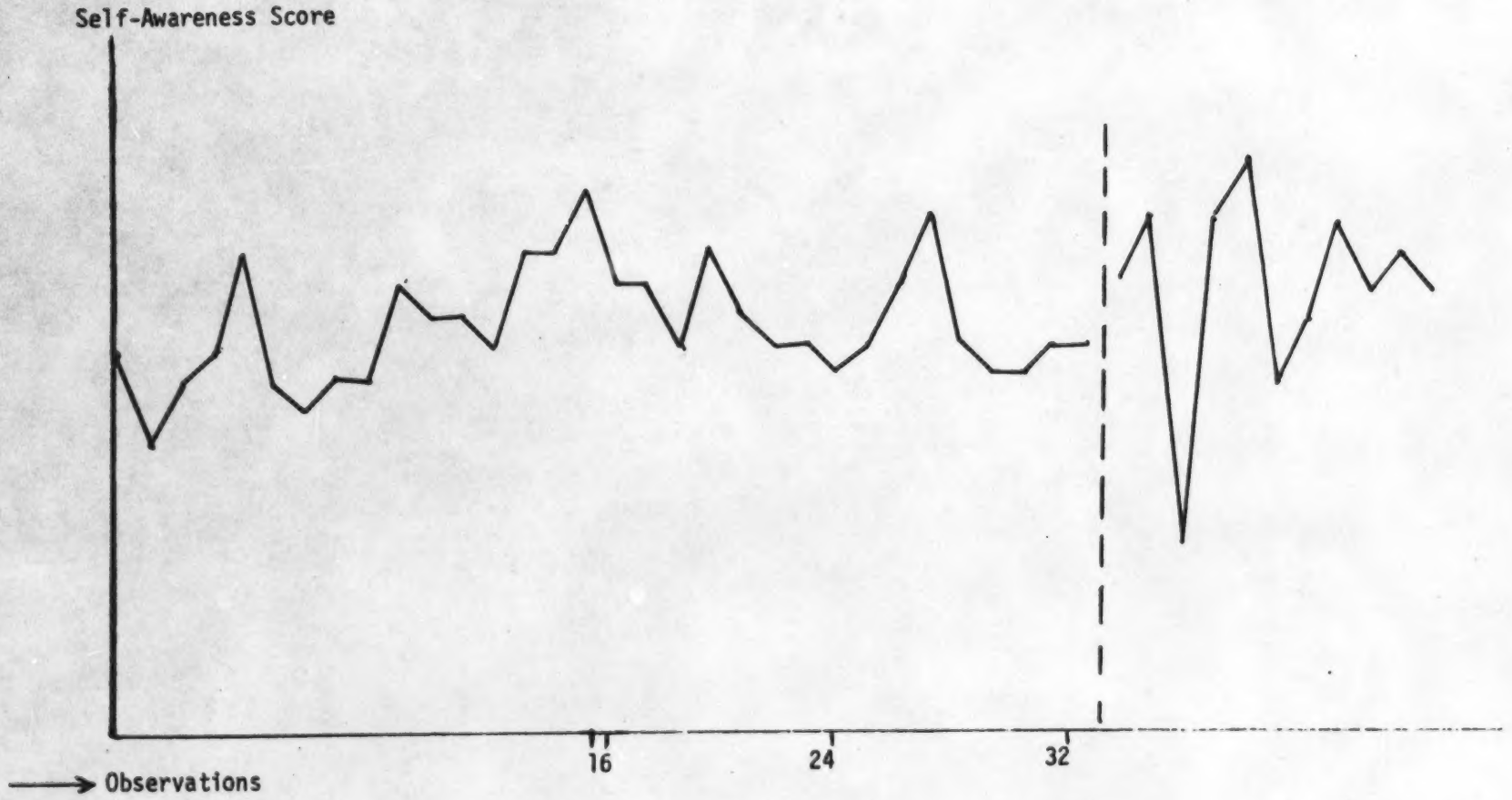

FIGURE 13. RESULTS FOR AUGUST COURSE ON SELF-AWARENESS

PARTICIPANT OBSERVATION OF OUTWARD BOUND

Jim Schott, with Mary Lee Smith

Expectations

The 6 hour bus ride from Denver to the San Juan Mountains let our fears and expectations incubate. My own fears centered on the age difference between myself and my fellow Outward Bounders. I guessed that I was twice as old as the rest and wondered if their strength and endurance would surpass mine. The prospect of failing physically and being a social outcaste was cheerless. Like the children around me, I knew something of what Outward Bound was supposed to be and to do to me. I was aware of its military origins and the rumored physical dangers of the program. There was also the intimation that one would experience the mystical entry into adulthood. Although I had long since entered adulthood, certain aspects of myself raised doubts about the coming 23 days: my fear of heights, my inexperience with competitive situations, my intransigence when pushed. The doubts were repeated mental questions. Would I be left behind? Would I panic half-way up some steep rock face? Would I fall into an adult role, take too much responsibility and be rejected? Would I quit? My confidence was low and my anxiety high. The silence on the bus led me to believe that the others were also ruminating on the experiences ahead. We each had our own private visions and nightmares.

Upon arrival at the Outward Bound ranch, we were favored with a patriotic speech from the course director. This address could have been lifted from Horatio Alger. We were admonished that we must not give up, our self-

concepts would be determined for life by whether we measured up to our expectations. "You can't go through an Outward Bound course and continue your life as if you hadn't had it... It's what's in here (pointing to his chest) that counts, It is the measure of a man that he will keep going when he wants to quit." My compatriots were enthralled.

We were told of the one-armed man who rappelled down a rock face and of the polio victim who finished second in the Marathon. "The course is what you make it." I guessed this meant that the rigor and danger vary with your willingness to push yourself. The one who pushes himself the hardest must be the most valuable person.

The director promised us that we would be transformed by the experience. If the transformation did not occur, it would be because we failed to put our hearts into the program. He planted doubts in our minds. He made us question our life-long assumption that our bodies and our emotions would tell us when we had had enough. Now this instinct was no longer to be trusted. It was a weakness, a temptation to quit too soon.

"There are going to be times that you will wish that you had never heard of Outward Bound." I was convinced that I would often be pushed beyond my endurance. I remembered guiltily that the recommended physical preparation (20 pushups, 10 pullups, 50 situps and a mile run daily) had been ignored. My army basic training was a distasteful memory. I remembered how it felt to be pushed to the point of exhaustion and how we were ridiculed when we finally gave in.

Perhaps the fearful memories and expectations caused me to accept the value system that the course director presented. In any other circumstances, I would have dismissed the speech as propaganda. But now, there was no

denying the goose flesh. The values were not completely palatable, yet they were frank and visible. I was afraid of what lay ahead. I would try on his line if it would help me through the next three weeks.

At the end of the speech patrols were formed. I was introduced to Dave, our patrol leader (who did not resemble my old dull instructor) and nine other people with whom I spent most of the course. We spent the first night around the campfire getting acquainted. Hesitantly, we found out about each other and our expectations for the experience. Joe wanted to test himself. Chris talked of her father's hope that she would become more calm. Debbie came because a friend did. Tom hadn't wanted to come at all but acquiesed to his employer's wish. I revealed my fear of heights and my hope to overcome it. Others had come for fun and expected no residual psychological effects. Except for me, the patrol was young. We were all middle-class whites. Each of us was fearful; the fears were expressed very differently.

Competencies

The first few days quieted our fears somewhat. The physical demands were not especially great. We learned how to cope with the equipment, the stoves, packs, and tarps. We were taught how to cook the freeze-dried food. We learned how to substitute natural resources for items such as soap and toilet paper. We learned first aid and personal hygiene. We found out how to keep warm at night and how to avoid blisters. We became proficient at reading maps and compasses.

To build our endurance and improve our physical condition we were guided on a series of hikes of increasing length. We found out how and

why to hike together, pace ourselves, and keep up energy on the trail. Our first important lesson was that the patrol moves only as fast as its slowest member. This rule was greeted with impatience by those who had come to Outward Bound for a rigorous physical experience. Some of the rest of us were relieved to discover that the slowest hiker was someone else. Even on the first hike Debbie fell into the role of the slowest and weakest. Although she was self-conscious about this role, she was soon surrounded by comforting, protective males.

We knew that our strength and competence were growing. We talked with pride about how far we had walked, how many feet of elevation we had gained, and how heavy the packs were. At that stage, Dave was with us and teaching us, showing us what trails to take and how to get across the inevitable obstructions. We grew confident as we learned our skills from him and tried to match his physical abilities.

For several members of the patrol almost every day was spent pushing farther and faster than they thought themselves able. For others, the slow pace taxed their patience rather than their endurance. I was in the middle, pleased to keep up and occasionally wanting to go faster. I was fatherly and solicitous of the slower members so my impatience never showed. The people who urged us to a faster pace on one day might be the one with blisters or a wrenched knee the next. Enduring pain was just as much part of the physical challenge of Outward Bound as was moving faster and farther than one wants to go. We began to experience the physical rewards as well. Physical exertion brought on feelings of exhilaration and well-being.

The high altitude phase of the course began as soon as we had mastered the basic skills and grown accustomed to the surroundings. We were taught

how to hike and camp above timberline. We learned how to handle the ropes and tie the proper knots. This knowledge was put to use in rock climbing and rappeling. During these days especially, Dave stressed safety and caution, warning us of the implications of even minor accidents in the high country. We took two expeditions. Interspersed with these activities was plenty of time to read, write, talk, and reflect on the experience.

Expeditions

Despite my growing self confidence I had until then been able to avoid situations which would arouse my fear of heights. Avoidance was no longer possible on our first rock climb. It was closely supervised, on a section of rock well known to the instructors. We lined up at the bottom and watched while Dave demonstrated the proper technique and more importantly, demonstrated that crawling up that sheer face was possible. Waiting my turn was excruciating. I watched a person from another patrol move too quickly and fail to plan his route. He was caught without an obvious way to advance or retreat. He froze for a time while the instructors yelled instructions and reassurance. Finally he was able to find a hold and resume his way. I felt embarrassed for him and planned my own route compulsively to avoid a similar predicament. I felt even greater apprehension when a girl lost her hold and fell. All climbers were roped in and wore hard hats so a short fall couldn't be disastrous. Yet watching that slip of even a few feet gave me chills. The climber yelled "falling" as required; her voice quivered and her hands grabbed futilely for a hold. By then I was sure that if I fell I couldn't go on.

When my turn came an instructor tied me in and I began. The route I

had plotted out in mind proved to be a good one. Like a chess player, a climber must plan one or two moves ahead to avoid being trapped. There were so many things to remember; I kept repeating the rules and strategies to myself. Move slowly and deliberately, have three points of contact, use the strength of your legs, keep your body erect and away from the cliff, keep in balance. I pushed fears out of consciousness by concentrating on the rock and repeating the rules. Occasionally Dave would shout some instructions that were obscured by the noise of my instructions to myself. At the top I was heartened to see that the person on belay was part of the staff and not some novice who held my safety in his hands. Later that day I got a chance to belay for a climber. Somehow that responsibility was more fearsome than my climb had been.

Dave assured us that in many situations rappeling is the easiest way to get down from a high place. That was the stated justification for learning to rappel. There was little way I could justify it to myself. We lined up again in our hard hats and watched as those ahead of us hooked up and disappeared over the edge. I sized up the fellow on belay to see if he was trustworthy and reviewed mentally the instructions given to us. There seemed to be no choice when it was my turn to hook up to the rope and figure-eight mechanism, turn my back to the abyss, and take that first big step backwards off the cliff. Unlike the rock climb, there was less to occupy my mind, and the fear of heights closed in on me. It affected me as an ache in the groin, threatening to turn my muscles to jelly. Knowledge that the others had already done it and confidence in Dave made it possible and necessary to take the step. I glided 150 feet to the ground remaining upright and avoiding an overhang that proved troublesome to some

of the others. After so much anticipation it was over in seconds. Once we became aware that there was little actual danger involved the rappel was like a carnival ride, perhaps a sham. They were using the mountains as psychological as well as physical obstacles. Our bodies were more than a match for the obstacles. When we were forced to face them we were sure to be successful and thus, feel confident and ready to assert ourselves against the next challenge.

After the rappel the people on my patrol wanted to be the first group to reach the resupply point. It was decided that the weakest hikers would stay behind so the rest of us could make better time. The resupply point was about five miles from camp. We pressed hard since this was the first opportunity we had had to set our own pace. I was exhilarated with the pace and gratified that I was able to keep up with Joe. On the way I fell down and twisted my knee. Although it hardly bothered me at first, it proved to be chronic and troublesome throughout the rest of the course.

The next day the entire patrol started on our first long alpine expedition. We hiked all day, coping as best we could with the different hiking speeds. Late in the afternoon we had not yet reached the projected camp site. By our own idiosyncratic process of decision making, we determined that the two strongest hikers would push ahead to locate the camp before sunset and guide the rest of us in. We hiked until it grew dark and once nearly missed the trail. Walking became laborious when the terrain unexpectedly turned to swamp. Our packs, recently loaded with food, settled into sore spots on shoulders and hips. We were plodding, making little progress, with no sign of our advance troop. Finally a light appeared in the distance, someone signalling us with a flashlight. We signalled back

and kept sloshing. The night was cold and we hadn't eaten. The Rio Grande, just wide enough to be troublesome, lay between us and the camp. The water was fast. It was too dark to see where to step so the only method was to take off your boots and feel your way through the rocks. With a sense of resignation I tied my boots to my pack and waded through the icy water. From behind me I heard Chris whimpering; she had lost her sneakers and couldn't make it. Not pausing to question myself, I dropped my pack on the bank, waded back and carried Chris on my back across the stream, then crossed for the third time to carry her pack. By that time my feet were so numb and my body so fatigued that I stumbled over a rock and fell.

When we finally got together at camp we discovered that one of us, Jon, was missing. He failed to appear all night and a search party was organized to look for him the next day. But that night I was too tired to examine my motives about leaving Jon in the woods or needing to provide succor to Chris.

The expeditions offered the greatest physical challenge. Muscles and lungs were strained to their capacity. More important was the investment in enduring pain and struggling against fatigue. The challenge of the environment was less in conquering obstacles than of persisting to the end. Yet the rewards were great. Most of the time was spent on the Continental Divide, the top of the world. I would need accompanying music from the world's grandest organ to describe the view; rolling tundra, steep morraines, canyons with sheer rock faces thousands of feet high. Most people never see such sights, so the experience seemed personal and exclusive. After the terror of the rappel and the pain and fatigue of the long marches, I could give up the struggle and give myself over to nature; there was no

more need to conquer it.

Solo

A mystique surrounds Solo. It is supposed to be three days and nights spent in isolation with no food or equipment. The time is meant to be spent in introspection and meditation. The experience is said to be akin to the initiation rites of primitive tribes. Most of my compatriots dreaded Solo more than any other part of Outward Bound. But there was little anxiety in it for me and it provoked no challenge. Although the sense of isolation was strong, I welcomed the chance to think about the course and to think about the other people. The only problem was the conflict about whether or not to take a sleeping bag. In his opening speech the instructor had said that taking one's bag on Solo was the real test of what one was putting into and getting out of the course. Taking the sleeping bag meant being a failure, according to my interpretation of his statement. That would be a difficult admission, but I also rationalized that we would be camping at 12,000 feet elevation. I had had enough of cold in the army to choose that kind of torture again. So I took the bag. The first night out found me resisting my weakness (but acquiescing to the director's values). I sat under an improvised shelter and tried without success to get some sleep. I walked to keep warm. Finally just before dawn, I gave up and crawled into the sleeping bag for a few hours sleep. In the morning I saw one of my colleagues who had gone without his bag. He was returning to camp to get it. I pretended not to see him. I tried to use the time as the instructor had indicated. Probably because being alone did not raise my anxiety, I did not have any kind of transcendent experience. I thought

a great deal about some personal problems. I fought off boredom and counted the hours until Solo would be over. I used the time to collect my notes and reflect on the other people and how each had so far been affected.

Social Challenge

Dealing with other people is an important part of Outward Bound but is often overshadowed by the physical demands of the experience. The social challenge consisted of learning how to make decisions as a group, getting along with each other in the worst conditions, resolving conflicts and overcoming isolation.

From the outset we were inescapably confronted with this challenge. Dave pointed to two barrels of food, three stoves, three tarps, three cook kits, two ropes, maps, and miscellaneous gear. This was the patrol equipment, and we would need to carry it. He didn't indicate how it was to be divided. And so began a process of difficult and tedious decision-making; how to organize the food, where to place the tarp, how to pitch the tarp, when to leave, which trail to take, whether to send two people ahead on the trail. Dave offered little help in this enervating process. Apparently, we were to determine whether decisions would be made democratically or by concensus or by an emergent authority. I felt a conflict between the desire to lead and the fear of setting myself apart where I could be rejected.

Making decisions produced conflicts; the wrong choice might lead to more difficult terrain, a longer trail, or worse, the wrong trail. The group heaped recriminations on the person who erred. A great premium was placed on competence and efficiency. Accomplishing the tasks set before

us -- getting safely from one point to another with a given amount of baggage -- required that the patrol confer leadership upon one person, hopefully, the most competent one. Everyone had to cooperate, divide the load and share the work to attain whatever goal we were seeking. Conflicts were inevitable whenever this cooperation failed. Our patrol became known as the screamers since any conflict escalated to a verbal eruption.

Many of the fights involved Jon who invited hostility simply by being himself. He seemed desperately in need of attention, but had developed only annoying ways of attracting it. He claimed to be on a special diet which excluded much of the freeze-dried food we ate. He demanded fruits. Besides his habit of eating honey with his fingers, he ate a foul smelling food supplement. He was extremely belligerant about the food and living conditions. In camp he bragged of his exploits, past and future; but on the trail he was a middling hiker at best. It was Jon who got lost overnight despite his professed mountaineering prowess. The rest of the group excluded him. The women refused to share their water bottles with him. Nancy insulted him whenever the opportunity arose. On a warm afternoon I watched the patrol sitting in a circle and talking. Jon sat apart; he was eating granola by the handful and watching the group. He inched toward the circle and tried to join it. No one moved aside to let him in or recognize him. He remained outside the group then and throughout the course. No one tried to help him understand his own behavior and how it was affecting others. The course director promised that we would understand ourselves better and be more aware of what we are. Although the program provided many situations that we could use to get information about ourselves, not everyone could accomplish this without assistance.

Chris's life was beauty contests, formal dances, and "Daddy." She came to Outward Bound with purple nail polish and an expensive coiffure. On the first day she accosted the instructor demanding that he help her with a recalcitrant sleeping bag zipper. She was laden with more cosmetics and clothes than an actress. During the first week she suffered stomach aches and homesickness. Everyone thought of her as a crier and complainer. In each new situation she whined that she couldn't do it and wouldn't do it. Then she would stumble in and do it, complaining the entire time. She seemed immature and sheltered. I decided that Outward Bound was especially designed for people like Chris. She had never worked, never been challenged, never really lived except vicariously through her parents and the media. The course forced her into a series of compacted experiences, causing her maturation to be accelerated. One could almost see her stamina and confidence grow as the course progressed. She tried hard, but never stopped complaining. She could not give up her ploy of professing weakness and hiding her strengths. The strategem must have worked for her; didn't it get her a free ride across the Rio Grande on my back?

Joe quickly assumed the role of mountaineer. From the beginning he showed himself to be knowledgeable and experienced. Although he made some bad choices, he was the strongest hiker and the most efficient camper. Because of the premium placed on competence, the patrol often deferred to Joe. He led with assurance. In spite of his prominence, he remains an enigma to me; he fit so comfortably into his role that he revealed little else about himself. His limits were not tested by the challenge of the course. The threat of failure that might have provoked introspection and change was missing for him. I doubt that the course was much more than a

summer camp to Joe.

Debbie was stereotypically feminine. She was passive and dependent and by far the weakest hiker. Being very attractive, she had each of the men helping her at one time or another. Even Dave discovered she wasn't eating enough and enjoined her to eat more. She gained in strength and stamina but remained dependent. If someone will take care of you, why bother to care for yourself?

Tom isolated himself and believed he was different from the rest. He couldn't accept the values that were taught on the course. He accused the instructor of trying to scare us and make us believe that the situations were more dangerous than they actually were. Many times Tom talked to me about quitting, but he couldn't do it. He was sullen and depressed until just before Solo when he finally relaxed a little. Tom invited rejection and failure and it was nearly impossible not to comply.

Once a person had fallen into a role in the group, it was virtually impossible to change it. Joe continued to be the leader and Debbie continued to be stereotypically feminine. I often felt that my freedom to express myself was hampered by the way others had come to view me. I believe that they viewed me as mature, helpful and solicitious, almost paternal. They valued my competence and my willingness to assume responsibility. Despite the restrictions to freedom caused by this role, I found myself unwilling to risk losing it by changing my behavior and expressing myself freely.

Our situation was unique. Ten of us were stranded in the wilderness, in a foreign environment. Our interdependence made it virtually impossible to eliminate anyone from the group. We had to deal with people who in our

ordinary lives, we could have merely avoided. Out of this situation came a feeling, if not of affection, at least of helpfulness and cooperation.

The instructor was an important part of the social challenge of Outward Bound. Dave's capabilities and self-confidence spawned a mythology. "He can hike all day uphill with a 90 pound pack and not get tired." I can always tell his footprints because they are two yards apart and two inches deep." There was the feeling that we could never attain his level of skill. Because he was larger than life to us he felt the brunt of our fears and frustrations. At first he was with us all the time, teaching us and taking care of us. We were almost completely dependent on him despite his preaching the virtues of self-reliance. After the first week he was with us less and less. We were forced to make our own decisions and rely on ourselves. Some people reacted with hostility to his withdrawal. Gradually, however, we were weaned.

Dave encouraged us to be "up front" with our feelings but didn't force the issue. Personal insights were our own responsiblity. Only one meeting was held with the purpose of discussing feelings and group conflicts. This was not especially successful; the words spoken had little to do with the feelings expressed on the trail. My attempts to share my emotional experience fell flat, and no one else made any similar efforts. Dave thought we should work out conflicts and personal discomforts on our own. Thus, many conflicts were unresolved; many feelings remained unexplained. Failures or personal losses were left undiscussed.

The two weeks in which the same people are on patrol together are full of potential for interpersonal experience and growth. Whether the potential is realized is determined by the composition of the group and the philosophy

of the patrol leader. I felt some frustration that I had not made the best use of the opportunities. Still, I felt close to my colleagues and knew they accepted me, so something had been gained. Unfortunately, the patrol group breaks up after Solo.

Final Expedition

The final expedition was designed to give us the chance to hike with people of similar abilities. We could choose the length and difficulty of the expedition. The routes varied from 25 miles of easy terrain, to 70 miles of rough terrain including peak climbs. This expedition took place without any supervision by instructors and gave us the chance to apply everything we had learned about mountaineering and campcraft.

Our patrol was broken up and I became acquainted with six new people. The comfortable niche in the old group was gone and I missed it. The boy who was designated leader immediately repelled me. I believed that the instructors placed him in charge because he was incompetent and needed the experience. He made several crucial mistakes. The others weren't much better. There was Leslie who carried the newspaper clipping of her debutante ball. Jim, a military brat, bragged incessantly about his possessions. He could do nothing with conviction, changing his mind and leading us all off course. Then there was Jerry who, after 20 days of Outward Bound, still had difficulty with maps, stoves, and tents.

On the second day out we were traversing a rock field half way up a ridge behind Sheep Mountain. We had agreed upon one route but midway Leslie decided we should change directions and aim toward what seemed to be an impassable ledge. Alternately yelling and crying she led us into a

steep section of loose rock. At that point she told me to take the lead, blaming everyone else for losing the trail. My anger got the best of me and I sat down, refusing to move. I told her to take responsibility and lead on or I would sit there all day. After tears, name-calling, and recriminations, she led us to the top of the saddle. The fight took more out of me than had the climb.

After that we got along better. We pushed hard and had little time or energy for arguments. Instead of expressing my still festering anger I became over solicitous toward the weaker members of the group and tried to concentrate on the climb. The interdependence and mutual cooperation necessary on the patrols had led to compassion and good feelings in my first group. Those same characteristics resulted in animosity and unresolved conflict in the second group.

The last day of the expedition was particularly memorable. At 6:00 a.m. we broke the fast with hot cereal (less sugar which Jim had used up the night before). Packing the equipment after breakfast felt like second nature. We climbed up onto the saddle which led to Red Cloud Peak. The rock ridge was only ten miles across. The wind blasted up from the canyon 2,000 feet below. I volunteered to empty my pack and lead the ascent. Knowing that this peak is what mountain climbers call a "walk-up" didn't make this ascent any less traumatic. Although I had already climbed four peaks, one more difficult than this, I was afraid to climb Red Cloud. The instructor had taken responsiblity for the other climbs. He chose the routes and knew what to do. Dave wasn't with us now and I was determined to lead the way. I felt that I was sufficiently skilled. But what if I tripped on one of those pieces of rock rubble? I wouldn't stop rolling

until I hit the trees a thousand feet below. The wind threatened to blow us over. Somehow it felt more secure to move along on all fours. Looking back down I could barely see where I had left my pack. More visible was Leslie's orange sleeping bag; she had decided not to make the ascent. A hundred yards from the summit my legs felt weak. The urge to quit was very strong but not as strong as the values I had accepted. I pushed myself the distance. There was some comfort in knowing that this was my last peak climb. At the top I shakily signed my name to the mountain club register. I felt no elation, merely relief.

On the way back to the main camp we encountered a four-wheel drive vehicle. Some of the group accepted food and a ride. Such was so contrary to the values we had supposedly accepted, I felt disdain for them.

Marathon

Only the marathon remained. The marathon consists of traveling over a six and a half mile course on a dirt road and a steep trail, going as fast as one can or wishes. After four days with my expedition group I was in no shape to face this endurance contest. In the opening day speech we were exhorted to "put everything into this last event." I had spent a lot of time trying to figure out a way to refuse this challenge and still feel good about myself. In the end I failed, I didn't have the courage to refuse. Nor did I, as I was slobbering into the third mile with rubbery legs and bursting lungs, have the courage to take it easy. The last mile or two were the worst. My knee which healed a bit during Solo had been weakened during the past four days, and running on it was painful. As I was half running, half hopping down a steep hill, I wanted to fall to have

an honorable way out. When I was within a hundred yards of the flag pole I could hear my speedy young contemporaries calling my name and encouraging me to pass the young man a few yards ahead of me. I limped across the finish line and collapsed. Sitting drinking juice and encouraging the remainder over the line, I felt the triumph of not being the last one done. The old man had not done so badly. But I felt little personal triumph. Nor did I revel in a new found sense of the strength and stamina of my body. I had persevered; I had done what was required. Gradually I had come to accept their ideas that to feel good about yourself you must do your best, strive your hardest, and refuse to give in to your weaker impulses.

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